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Foreign Correspondence, Items, etc.

Dear Crayon:

Rome, December 17, 1859.

My last letter ended with the appearance of my old friend Will H****, who seemed to have dropped from the skies for my especial benefit. "Why, old boy," he exclaimed, "what on earth's the matter? You look as blue as if there had been a heavy fall in sheetings, with a thundering stock on hand unpaid for. Wake up. What have you got for your breakfast? Is that all?—no wonder you're blue—only a marvel you are not dead and buried long ago, if that's the sort of feed you get. Dry bread and coffee *lactey*, as these Eyetalians call their slop! Sling it out the window. I'm not going to stop five minutes on such fare. I can't do it even with you. So come along with me to my hotel, where I've ordered something like a breakfast. The fellow wanted to know how many were to come. I told him 'six,' for I knew I should never get enough without."

It seemed as though I had been touched by a magician's wand, and had become another man in an instant, the feelings and impulses of former times having suddenly rushed back to their wonted places. I could scarcely realize the fact that we were not back again in our old bachelor home in New York, and even fancied that I heard the rattle, under the window, of the line of omnibuses in which we used to ride together to our place of business.

As my friend would listen to no compromise of his determination to have him accompany him at once to his hotel, off we started arm in arm. Such a breakfast as we had together! Such an enkindling and renewal of old sympathies and impulses! I was in truth another man, no other than myself again, Timothy Packingbox.

"Now, my dear Tim," said Will, "lighting his segar and sending both legs half way out the window, "let's know what you are about here. How in thunder do you manage to keep the blue mold off of you in this confounded dull place? What these great stone houses were ever built for—or the town either—I can't make out, for nobody seems to make any use of them. I got here last night—haven't yet seen anything worth staying another day for, and mean to be off to-morrow."

I hesitated, but at last frankly confessed the nature of my occupation since I had come to Florence.

"Old masters be ——," exclaimed Will with one of his jolly chuckles. "Haven't you got that kink out of you yet, Tim? I foresaw you would get yourself into a boat sometime or other ever since you were first sucked into buying an old cuss of a picture at Levi's—a little before you sold out of the firm; but I hardly thought you would make such a fool of yourself as all this. Why, you made yourself a laughing-stock for half New York by that lot of trumpery you sent over; the other half would call you so too, if they did not pity you for a fool with more money than brains. Then, there are those letters which you have been writing to the CRAYON,—Tim, Tim, what the devil has beset you?"

No country boy caught in the act of stealing milk could be more penitent. I kept still, and Will continued: "My business in coming abroad is to hunt you up, and to persuade you, and, if necessary, kick into you some of your old common sense. Now I have got you again, I don't mean to let you go until I'm done with you, or you with me, and that will be for a precious long time to come, old boy. Confound all the old pic-

tures and statues, and the new ones, too, I say! Have you met with any woodcock or trout in your travels, Tim? tell me that. They say there's lots of sport, with some sense in it, about Rome. I brought my old Joe Manton along as far as Leghorn, but they wouldn't let me fetch it up here, so I left it in the hands of our consul, and I mean to be off after it just as soon as I can pack you up. You are no shot, I know, but I have brought out your old Conroy rod with all your tackle, and another outfit like it for myself, and I tell you what, Tim, we'll have old times over again, if there's any boy's fun to be waked up in all Italy. If there is not, we'll follow it up until we find it somewhere."

Will got up and strode about the room, and then continued:

"It's no use for such old fellows as you and I, Tim, to be kicking our heels about New York now. There is not room enough there for us; the youngsters' elbows are sharp and they use them. There's not a bit of harmless, wholesome fun to be had now within a hundred miles of Pearl street! Then, again, I don't choose to be pointed at as old Will H. of the ancient firm of Packingbox & Co. I ain't old until I say so, and never mean to be! Neither of us are out of sight of fifty. We haven't chick, child or wife to bother us with their 'you must' or 'you can't,' and we don't owe any man the first red cent. We've got enough money to buy us comfort for the rest of our days. We have been jolly boys and bachelors together. We swept the store of our old boss by turns. We were both promoted to a stool and desk and an interest in the concern at the same time. We bought out the old partners as we sold out in our turn together to the present firm. So we'll stick together to the end of one or both of us, like solid old bricks as we are. We never had but one quarrel in all our lives, Tim, and that was when you took this confounded whim into your head about old pictures, and which I mean to have out of it. So pack up at once and let's be off."

In spite of the arguments of my old friend, I must confess that the thought of abandoning my long cherished schemes and plans, and the enjoyment derived from indulgence in at least a harmless pursuit, touched me very keenly—and I even ventured to offer reasons against doing so.

"Oh! confound your reasons; I don't want to hear any of them," said Will. "It is all humbug and nonsense. The pictures that you have sent to New York wouldn't sell for fifty cents apiece all round. As for that thing you made such a fuss about, and called a work of Raphael, it was not fit to make a fire-board of. I don't pretend to know anything about such matters, and am even thankful that I don't, but, I can tell you, there is but one opinion upon the subject with every one who has seen it. All your old friends at home, whenever your name is mentioned, are exclaiming, 'what a pity!' Now, Tim, if you can stand that, I can't and I won't. I did it as long as I could. I know you are a hard-headed sort of a fellow in your own way, and that it was no use writing to you. So I took steamer at once, and came over in nine days and four hours—stopped in London just long enough to get my Joe overhauled and put in first-rate order—laid in some fresh gut, leaders and tackle, and then pushed right ahead after you. Here I have you at last safe enough, and don't you believe but that I mean to hold on to you! So kick your dirty, rubbish canvases to flinders, make a bonfire of your old panels, and let's be off to Rome or somewhere else by the light of them. You may take two hours to make up your mind, while I go and have a look at that Venus de Medici that there is such a muss made about

all over the world. Any way you can fix it, Tim, you've got to go with me; so you may as well consider that as at once settled."

With vacillating and troubled thoughts I wended my way to the scene of the vexations of the day before. The means of relief that I longed for earnestly then, now that they were within my reach, brought to me, as it were, by a merciful Providence, I now hesitated to make sure of. More than once the old leaven of my delusion returned upon me so as to make me wish that my old friend had stayed at home and let me alone. Somehow or other I had lost all thought or dread of gendarmes and tribunals, and every step that I ascended to my magazine of art-treasures, as I had long indulged my fancy and inclination to consider them, seemed to draw the infatuation closer around me.

On the last landing-place I found, to my surprise, my man quietly smoking the stump of a segar. He looked just as ever, greeted me with his usual *buon giorno signor*, and merely added, "we are both rather late this morning."

There must have been something unusual in my look, or else it was the coldness with which I returned his salutation, for I caught a cat-like inquiring fierceness of expression in his eye, as I unlocked the door and entered. He was at his usual place in an instant. "Shall we go on with the Andrea del Sarto this morning, signor? there are three toes to be got on the left foot of the *bambino*, and St. Giuseppi's robe is to be patched with gesso in several places. Then I think we had better give it a couple of good coats of varnish and let it stand a day or two, while we get the old varnish and dirt off the Fra Angelico, and regild the glories and the borders on the angels' dresses and ——"

I interrupted him with the abrupt inquiry of "what were you about last evening at the wine shop in the Via di Bianchi with Signor T. and the two gendarmes?"

"Oh! *si, signor*," he stammered forth with a spasmodic twitch of expression in which a supplicating leer in one eye, a knowing wink in the other, and a spaniel-like, half-laughing snarl, made up a general impression. "Why—yes—I was settling *that* business. I suspected it was all a sham about the tribunal, so I followed them up. Signor T. knows better than to go before a tribunal in any such affair. He sent the gendarmes here to frighten you. I told them that it would not do—that you had a pistol always in your pocket that would go off one hundred times without reloading, and were a perfect devil incarnate when once roused. Besides, I gave them all to understand that you were the cousin of the President of America, and that they had better hush the matter up as quietly as possible, which they were glad to do. So we went together to drink a *flasco* or two to your health out of the *francescone* you gave me, and it is now all right. The Signor T. said he would pay his respects to you to-day, and bring with him a beautiful and undoubted Magdalen by Correggio, which he hoped you would accept as a *ricorda* of friendly feeling." And thus, I thought, have I been made a fool of by a parcel of knavish Italians!—old friend, you are right. I am with you.

It was a matter of three or four days' business before I could pack up all my old-master property, to which I still clung with an affection that by no means abated as I saw each one by turn consigned to the imprisonment of boxes and safely lodged in a store-house. During this time I saw but little of my friend, except on evenings, and I was surprised to find, in answer to all my inquiries as to the occupation of his time, that

it had been spent at the Uffizj, the Pitti, and the cloisters of the various churches and convents of which I had occasionally heard, but knew nothing. He said little about anything that he had seen, and attributing his quietness to a patient feeling of indulgence in allowing me to settle my affairs, I hurried their conclusion with all possible expedition, and at last told him that I was ready.

"Then let's be off by the first train to Leghorn," he exclaimed, with evident satisfaction.

I was desirous of taking the route by Perugia, but when questioned as to my reasons, found an involuntary blush in my face, at the thought that I could give no other than a long entertained idea that about Arezzo and Perugia some rare works of the old masters might be picked up. But I dared not utter the word to Will. There was something in the unflinching steadiness of his eye, whenever the drift of our conversation set in that direction, that awed me into silence.

As we were whirled away from Florence along the lovely valley of the Arno—Will and I side by side—I felt as though I was at last thoroughly awakened out of a strange and yet pleasant dream from its many remembrances, and yet I could not but confess that he was not far wrong in many of his conclusions. "There is one thing, Tim," said Will, interrupting my reflections, "that I dislike most of all in the business, because it is the hardest to amend. It mattered little what you chose to do to gratify your own tastes or inclinations, but those letters to the CRAYON were ill-judged and imprudent, to say the least of it. Some have taken them for a quiz. Few imagine that any man in his right senses could write such nonsense in earnest. I, myself, could not make out where the trouble was until the trumpery which you sent over came along. You should have been more cautious. But the thing's done, and think no more about it. If you choose to buy pictures," he continued, "old or new, with your own money, you have a perfect right to do so, and it's no other man's business. If they are as black as night, and as unintelligible to any one else, as pretty much all these affairs, that you call the old masters, are to me, it concerns none other than yourself. But when you come to crowd them off upon others against the grain, you make yourself a meddler in matters which would take more years to understand than you and I have spent in substantial business, for which God made and better qualified us. I love pictures as well as you do—I think I love them better, for I appreciate them more fairly. I had the start of you in my love, I am sure; for yours only began with the purchase of a daub of an old saint, and mine with the first impulses of my childhood. From far back, among most dearly cherished memories, have they occasionally come to me in dreams of beauty—transient, yet ever heart-consoling, as I have toiled along the rough ways of life. Not alone have these pictures consisted of sunny fields and shadowy groves or murmuring brooks, but facts of history or fiction, that have been suggested to my mind by books or narratives. I know nothing of your schools and masters, and especially, thank heaven, the old ones; but when a work of art touches my heart and reaches my comprehension, as nature does, I recognize its claims to excellence, while I despise that with which I can feel no sympathy, and in which I can discover no truth. You may tell me that I have no taste. If by that is meant that I want the capacity of seeing with others' eyes, I do not desire to have any. The other day, as I strolled through the Gallery of Florence, where I went to see the only work of art I had ever heard of, the Venus de Medici, I felt that, could

I begin my life anew, I might be brought to love art so dearly, as, indeed, if it were possible, to become an artist. You stare at me, Tim, but it is true. If any man had predicted, when I started on this wild-goose chase after you, that I should ever covet a statue or a picture, I should have called him a fool. Had he told me that I should ever buy one I should have been sorely tempted to have knocked him down. I confess to the one, and, by jingo! I mean to do the other. And I will tell you another thing, my dear Tim, I don't mean to have you buy for me either. If I was rich enough to purchase it, I would have that Madonna and Child which I saw in the tribune. I think a fellow, with a glass hitched under one eye, and a red covered guide-book in his hand, and who pretended to discover what he called very false drawing in it (I could have kicked him), said it was by one Correggio. I don't care a snap who did it. He was a clever fellow—had a heart to feel and a hand to answer its impulse and convey its impression, or he could not have touched mine as he did by his picture. And that Holy Family by your old friend Raphael—over there in the grand duke's palace! When you were about it, Tim, why didn't you send over something like that? I don't wonder so much now that these Catholics worship the Madonna. I felt, as I contemplated that picture, the reality of a woman as the mother of divinity—and then that heavenly boy—the expression of his eye follows me still, and will forever."

Will kept silent for a while, and then resumed: "That marble Venus is a lovely work; but, somehow or other, I felt that it was hardly right to look at her. Involuntarily I took off my hat and almost begged her pardon. How I envy you, Tim, the time and opportunity you have had for the contemplation and enjoyment of such precious gifts of genius. What have we both not lost for want of some such source of consolation during the long years in which we have toiled together to gain what the world calls riches. Money's a blessing when a man knows how to make good use of it—which doesn't always mean the making more of it, by long odds."

I listened with amazement. This from Will, whom I never before imagined to harbor a thought that there was anything worthy of a man's consideration after business but his dog and gun and rod. I felt humbled before him, to think that I had passed more than two years among pictures, and never yet looked at one but with some motive of old-master jockeyism. I owned in my heart that he had at once, not only got the start, but left me far behind, withering among old and dilapidated art-rubbish, from which I resolved to free myself forever.

I have done so—and in the way of its accomplishment, I have discovered so many sources of more real enjoyment, that I do not see that I can better retrieve my errors than by their frank confession, which I make most heartily.

Perhaps it may be of some interest to you and many of your readers, to know what we old fellows have been about all this time, and, if so, I may tell you more hereafter. There is far more to be seen and enjoyed in this lovely land than most of our travelling countrymen ever get a glimpse of.

Yours, TIMOTHY PACKINGBOX.

LONDON, November 23, 1859.

Dear Crayon :

. . . . A week ago the seventh winter exhibition of cabinet pictures opened at the French Gallery under the auspices of Messrs. Gambart & Co. It is a small collection of pictures (172 works by 98 artists), and but a few of them are *very* good. The Royal Academicians are out in small numbers and not in

their strength. David Roberts has two scenes in Rome, which are fine in their broad sketchy way. There is no nursing up of petty details, nor regard to weather stains, cold and warm reflections, various modulations of light, and all those countless details which a Pre-Raphaelite would aim at, and which nature gives in exquisite perfection. And yet, with all their slightness, these pictures present a broad, masterly sense of space, grandeur and dignity; they are harmonious in color and lack nothing in strength of execution. It is for these qualities that I like these works. The age of Art seems to be transforming itself, dwindling away into smooth, shining surfaces and excessive minutiae—mere softness and prettiness without the ennobling stamp of grand design and broad, manly execution. It is for these characteristics that the old landmarks in Art, such as Roberts and Stanfield, call forth my great admiration, notwithstanding they are seldom up to their former efforts. Stanfield has two pictures here, also, but they are by no means equal to his standard. In this week's Illustrated News (Nov. 26th), is an engraving of one of these pictures which strikes me as better than the picture. This cut seems to aim after some individual truth, while the picture has only a general representation to commend it, it being not altogether true or vigorous at that. But when you see works like "The French Troops crossing the Magra," "The Battle of Noveredo," "The Victory towed into Gibraltar after the Battle of Trafalgar," "The Abandoned," etc., etc., which are noticed in the sketch of his life, in the same paper, and which I have seen, you cannot but place him among the greatest painters that have lived. The likeness given with the sketch is not good.

To return to the cabinet exhibition. Philip, who has just been made an academician, has a very beautiful picture of a Spanish woman which he calls "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." She is a beautiful olive-complexioned woman holding up her fan and bestowing upon you the most fascinating look, as she passes along the street to a corner, where a *contadini* is just raising his hat to her. The picture, the figure about three-quarters length, has great freedom, correctness of drawing, and extremely beautiful color. If there is any fault in it, it is that the face, although beautiful, may be a little heavy in complexion. It is one of those pictures that one would covet out of hundreds of beautiful things. Holman Hunt and Millais each have a little picture, but I do not take to them. J. B. Burgess has a most charming work. Cropsey is represented by two Isle of Wight studies, which are placed in honored positions, and are deservedly admired, as one can see both in the London Times and the Athenæum.

Since writing the above I have been to the private view of David Roberts' sketches in Spain, taken during the years of 1832 and 1833, many of which are familiar to you through engravings in the annuals of that time. These sketches were purchased of Roberts, and have since been sold to a gentleman in the north of England; they number seventy-five examples not exceeding 8 + 12 inches each. These sketches are made on a bluish grey paper, with opaque color touched on for the higher lights, and a few washes for the deeper half-tints with darker touches for focusing the effect. The simplicity and ease with which these drawings seem to have been made, are quite wonderful points of interest; one cannot but be impressed with the power of the artist, who, with a bit of grey paper, a few firm pencil marks, and a few washes and touches of color, can give with so much breadth and effect the complicated forms

and the delicate play of light and shadow that we find in those beautiful transcripts of Spanish architecture. Three interior church views are charming; when viewed from a distance, they reveal atmosphere, space and character, and when viewed closer, hundreds of delicate forms of arch and ornament, molding and mullion, and all without impairing the grand effect of the masses. The figures are touched in with equal success, and at times form the most exquisite arrangements of color.

In all these drawings, even the slightest, not one moment is lost in unnecessary labor; every pencil-line, every blot of color, even the texture and tint of the paper, are unerringly used to the end of unity and finish. Perseverance may accomplish great works, but the beauty of these sketches results from a skillful hand guided by a determined and intelligent eye. It is for this power of grasping all at once the capabilities of the subject, so as to render it in a simple, free manner to the extent of his means, without forethought or afterthought, that I so much admire Robert's best works. Such things, to my mind, constitute him a master, and not that pin-point execution on ten feet canvases which has with you received a certain degree of popular favor.

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ENGLAND.—The Royal Institute of British Architects have elected a professional member, Mr. Cockerell, President of the Institute, and successor in office to a nobleman, the late Earl de Grey. The debate that took place at the meeting for election shows that the dignity and interests of noble causes are still more or less dependent upon the feudal principle of patronage. One of the members thought that a nobleman should be invited to become the president on the ground of his being free from professional predilections, having access to the throne and able to convene social gatherings on a grander scale than common with less favored mortals. The candidate elect said, in the course of the discussion, that "it was to the House of Lords we must look for a perfect gentleman, and one capable of throwing the oil of gladness on troubled waters." Fortunately, the speaker's modesty, ability, age and professional standing prevailed against himself over the conventionality of rank.

As an instance of judicious management in respect to a competition of architects, we cite the following: A Mr. Hartley, resident of Southampton, left to this town by will £100,000 (diminished £60,000 by a chancery contest with his heirs), to found an institute for the promotion of literary and scientific pursuits. Plans for a building were obtained from various architects, to the number of forty-seven. The corporation, instead of deciding upon the merits of the plans, had the good sense to select a competent judge to decide for them; and, accordingly, invited Professor Donaldson to perform this office. The position, knowledge and disinterestedness of the professor left no room for dispute, and his verdict is respected.

Among the gossip of the sales-rooms, says an English paper, we are told that, early in the spring, the pictures, drawings and sketches of O. R. Leslie will be sold at auction. Mr. Leslie's small but choice collection of paintings and sketches, chiefly by his contemporaries, water-color drawings by Cozens, Girtin, etc., and a large collection of engravings from the works of Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Constable, etc., afford a fine chance for amateurs to make valuable acquisitions.

Social progress in England may be likened to the march of a menagerie elephant, slow, lumbering and cautious; never making a transit over an unfamiliar road without rebelling at the bridges it must walk over, the safety of which it cannot

comprehend until forced to test them. An encouraging sign of English development is to be found in an occasional just obituary notice of Macaulay. No literary man in England better reflects English views of literature and an English sense of its rewards. How a writer, remarkable for prejudice, dullness of perception, narrowness of comprehension, and erudition without judgment, his redeeming point a brilliant manipulation of words, could acquire the popularity and honors he enjoyed, is one of those phenomena in the literary world that can only be accounted for by national idiosyncrasies. The English mind seems to require rhetorical lords, men who are made peers of intellect because willing to hold office subject to popular standards. Having a legislative house of commons which the English consider as the best governing body in the world, it will have a commons of mind upon the same principle, selecting its members from men who can cater to a hustings mob, rather than men who will not debase themselves. It is the old story of Lord Coke and Lord Bacon over again—both weak, the one little and mean by nature, and the other great but conventionally tried and found wanting; the one honored before death and the other a long while after it. Why we know so little of Bacon and so much of Coke is easily accounted for by the verdicts of the present. It is a saving grace in Macaulay that he forbade his peer's coronet to be carried before his body on its way to the grave; it seems as if a sense of his mushroom position had dictated the order.

THE CRAYON.

NEW YORK, MARCH, 1860.

Sketchings.

DOMESTIC ART GOSSIP.

BALTIMORE.—The only item of gossip from the Monumental City is a graphic letter from a correspondent describing the last reception of the Allston Association, which took place on the 10th January. Our correspondent says, under date of the 25th January:

"The soiree took place on the 10th inst., as you are aware. The most agreeable feature of the party was the presence of quite a considerable number of artists from New York and Philadelphia, who were in Baltimore *en route* for the convention at Washington, or staying here to attend the wedding of one of the brotherhood, which took place the next evening. Among our guests, no less than fourteen artists saw their works upon the walls. The exhibition was composed almost exclusively of works received from abroad—and for which we desire to make a warm acknowledgment. Nothing was sent to us of a merit below the best ability of the artist. Writing away from the rooms, and without reference to the catalogue, I can only enumerate from memory a few of the names and works it contained. Rosa Bonheur's "Morning in the Highlands" held a choice place on the main panel. It was supported on one side by a delicious landscape of Bellows, which, I am happy to add, found a quick owner at the artist's price. In the same panel appeared Lambdin, Richards and others. Opposite was hung the "Pennsylvania Wedding," by Woodville, formerly of Baltimore, in company with Wittkamp, Fichel (a little gem, "Amateurs examining Curiosities") a female head by Gray, and landscapes by the Harts, Mrs. Greatorex and others. One small panel contained a figure by ———,